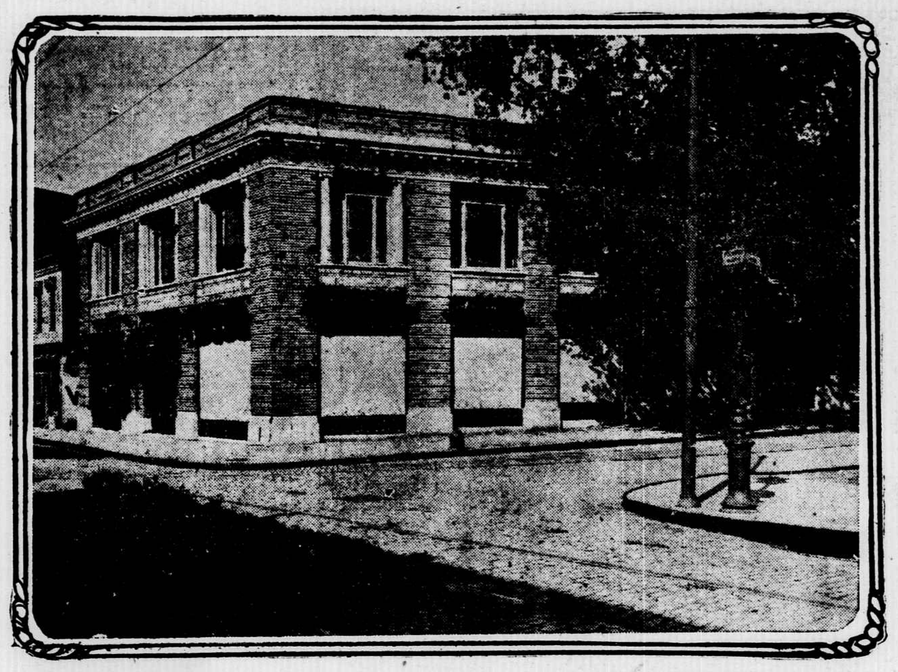
GEORGETOWN GAS OFFICE.



BUILDING ERECTED FOR USE OF THE COMPANY AT WISCONSIN AND DUMBARTON AVENUES.

CONCRETE AS PAVEMENT STILL PUZZLES BUILDERS

Expansion Not All Due to Moisture, and Joints Used Are Frequently Inadequate.

During the past two or three years many descriptions of concrete pavements laid in various parts of the country have been published and considerable enthusiasm for this class of construction as a pavement on streets having a light to moderate traffic has been manifested by city engineers, according to P. E. Green, in the Engineering News. However there are some grave defects in concrete pavement which, as far as our present knowledge of the material is concerned, restricts its use to rather narrow limits.

There are two characteristics of concrete which tend to reduce its value as a pavement—susceptibility to changes in temperature and inability to resist abrasion. Expansion often takes several weeks to fully manifest itself. Every one has seen this action in the case of concrete sidewalks. Curbs are frequently sheared off in this way, and an ordinary sidewalk will expand six inches in a block of 300 feet, partly the result of temperature and partly of chemical activity while setting up.

Not All Fault of Moisture.

It has been stated that the largest part of this expansion is due to moisture, and that if moisture is excluded the expansion will be almost entirely eliminated. The writer is inclined to question this, for while moisture may accelerate the expansion, it is not believed that it really affects the ultimate condition.

If the concrete foundation of any pavement laid in the summer and exposed for two or three days to the hot sun be examined cracks will be found at intervals of ten to twenty feet, extending across the roadway. They are especially noticeable after the cool of the night, during which time contraction takes place. It is probable that two out of three asphaltic pavements having a concrete base show cracks during the winter extending across the roadway at intervals of fifty feet or so, and examination will show that in nearly all cases the cause is the foundation.

Inadequate Expansion Joints.

In the past too little attention has been given to this problem. Concrete pavements as laid have been provided with expansion joints transversely at intervals of 100 feet, and sometimes longitudinally along the curb. This amount of expansion joint is entirely inadequate, and the result has been that within a short time the surface has become a mass of unsightly cracks.

In this connection it is not amiss to call attention to the effect of the appearance of unsightly cracks upon the value of adjacent property in city streets. Property owners for this very reason have frequently bitterly fought asphalt pavements, many of which in the early years of that industry became badly cracked in a few months after they were finished. It has been suggested by some well known engineers that the cracks in concrete pavements are not of great importance, and, if desired, they may be cleaned out and filled with bitumen. This may be all right for country roads, but it certainly would not do for city streets, where the appearance of the pavements has a very decided effect upon the value of the property.

Resisting Abrasion.

The second important characteristic of concrete, that of inability to resist abrasion, is also vital, though it may in a measure be controlled by the selection of the stone to be used in the wearing course. The writer is convinced that for such a purpose a very hard, dense stone is required, such as granite or trap rock, and if such stone is not available a very moderate amount of traffic will soon ruin the pavement. Even with the use of granite, and under a moderate city traffic, in two or three years the wear is very apparent.

Recently a news item was published in a technical paper to the effect that some Minnesota officials had inspected Chicago concrete pavements and had been highly pleased with them. The writer does not know how the inspection was made, but thinks it rather strange in view of the fact that, as a street pavement, concrete has not been a success in Chicago except possibly in alleys. In spite of careful construction, nearly all of it has become badly cracked, and where there has been heavy teaming traffic, the maintenance has been very expensive.

Concrete Repairs Expensive.

Repairs to a concrete pavement are not easily or cheaply made, in spite of assertions to the contrary. It will not do to make a repair by plastering. The section must be cut out completely and a new one put in, and good workmanship is required to get adequate results.

The technical journals of the country have discussed for years the best method of joining old and new concrete. Such discussion is the best possible evidence that to make a satisfactory bond is not an easy operation, yet it is often asserted that it is a simple matter to make repairs to concrete pavements. Such a statement is misleading.

Concrete lacks a fundamental quality without which it is believed no pavement can be a success; that is, elasticity. In the general theory of pavements some means of sustaining a load and of transmitting the shock of impact to the foundation must be provided. This is done in most of the modern types of construction by dividing the pavement into two separate and distinct parts—the foundation and the wearing surface. The foundation maintains the load and the wearing surface transmits the shock of traffic to the foundations.

Covering Rough Surfaces.

There has been recently a considerable advocacy of covering the rough surface of a concrete pavement with a mixture of bitumen and sand, the bitumen being generally tar. The cost of this treatment is not high, running from 10 to 20 cents per square yard. At first sight this would appear to be a good idea, but experience with bituminous macadam and sheet asphalt tends to make the writer believe that it should be accepted with caution.

In the first place both tar and asphalt are very susceptible to changes in temperature, and tar especially so. Also tar having a high melting point is largely pitch, and at low temperatures is very brittle. Hence, if there is even a moderate amount of traffic on the pavement in cold weather, it will tend to spall off in large patches if the concrete is at all smooth, giving the pavement an unsightly appearance.

CYPRESS FOR INTERIORS.

Forestry Bulletin Points Out Its Advantages Over Other Woods.

In discussing the use of cypress for exterior and interior finish in connection with building construction, bulletin 95, recently issued by the forest service, offers the following comment:

Cypress is put to almost every use as an interior trim for houses. It may be finished in natural color or stained. The wood contains little resin, and thus affords a good surface for paint, which it holds well. It is much used for door frames, window frames, transoms, ceiling, wainscoting, panels, doors, sash, balusters, inside blinds, brackets, newel posts, grilles, mantels and to some extent for flooring. It is a popular wood for kitchens, where it is subjected to dampness and heat. It shrinks, swells or warps but little, and is used for drainboards, sinks, kitchen and pantry tables, cupboards and kitchen cabinets. For the same reason it is used for breadboards and wooden implements about the pantry, ironing boards and clothes driers.

For the parts of houses exposed to the weather it serves equally well. As siding it practically wears out before it decays. When made into porch and portico columns it retains its shape, holds paint and has sufficient strength to sustain necessary loads. It is placed as cornice, gutters, outside blinds, pilasters and railing, and is much used for porch floors and steps.

HAS MAGNIFICENT ENTRANCE.

Woolworth Building in New York to Surpass All Others.

According to the details and drawings of Cass Gilbert, who is architect of the fifty-five-story Woolworth building in course of erection in lower Broadway, New York city, that structure will have when completed one of the most magnificent entrances and corridors probably ever planned for an office building. The details call for a treatment in marble, mosaic and decorative iron with a lighting system which will make this portion of the building notable.

In the first place the entrance on Broadway will be thirty-five feet high and fourteen feet wide and will have a tracery and ornamentation in carved Indiana stone. The design is an adaptation of the Gothic and follows the general style of the building. The bases are of granite, polished, six and one-half feet high. The entrance is deeply recessed and access to the building is through two sets of doors, above the outside set of which is to be a heavy glass screen.

Probably the greatest feature of the entrance hall will be the ceiling, which will be of the vaulted type with an immense dome at the point where the transverse corridors intersect. The entire ceiling is to be finished in an ornamental mosaic of a specially prepared design to conform to the general style of the building.

Malady of the Trees.

From the New York Evening Post.

The old cry, spare that tree, is now being directed against a far less impressionable destroyer than the professional woodman. We are familiar with the ravages among chestnuts and oaks in this part of the country, where, despite state legislation, foresters express hopelessness regarding the outcome of the campaign. In California, too, a similar menace has appeared in what is there called the oak-root fungus, which attacks not oaks only, but fruit trees also. The "disease" shows itself in places where oaks have been cleared away but not thoroughly rooted out. Let the roots of a healthy orange tree touch such buried roots, and it soon becomes sickly and finally dies. Furthermore, it passes the contamination on to its neighbors. The experts at the State University admit that they have not been able to find a cure when the "disease" has taken a good hold, and can do no more than suggest that a protective wall of some sort be built around the roots of healthy trees that are in the vicinity of "sick" ones. In addition to this evil, a curious blight has seized upon the walnut trees in one section of the state. It is difficult to believe that science can be permanently worsted in a fight of this kind, but the critical point is that time is of the essence of the problem. Not to win soon is not to win at all for this generation.

GEORGETOWN GAS CO. HAS FINE NEW HOME

Will Soon Abandon Offices on 29th Street, Where Officers Have Met Since 1854.

The Georgetown Gas Light Company, for the first time since it was organized, nearly sixty years ago, will soon have a moving day. At that time the old building at 1118 29th street, south of M street and on the incline of the hill to the banks of the river, will be vacated. The rooms where the president and the other officers and directors of the company have sat since the year 1854 will no longer know them, and the main office room, where two generations of gas consumers have come monthly to pay their bills, and also, no doubt, to "kick," will be deserted.

From 29th street and its associations the officers and employes are going to the new building which has just been completed and occupies the northeast corner of Wisconsin and Dumbarton avenues. It is a modern, up-to-date structure.

New Building Substantial One.

It is a substantial building, with plenty of windows, wide and generous, which the architects, Marsh & Peter, have used with decorative effect. There are entrances on a level with that of the pavement, in contrast to the flight of old-fashioned steps which callers had to climb to the main entrance of the old office.

The exterior walls are faced with gray velvet bricks in Flemish bond, in combination with white terra cotta and limestone. The main entrance from Wisconsin avenue is finished in marble and Caen stone and leads into the business office with a large public space, finished with gray oak wood work and decorated walls, with bronze grilles separating the offices for Robert D. Weaver, the president, and for the secretary and bookkeepers, and there are reception rooms for patrons.

The upper floor, approached by a wide oak staircase, will have a feature which will appeal to the general public, being a series of rooms, each completely equipped for demonstrating the proper use of gas in kitchens, dining rooms, etc. There are also alcoves for the testing of various types of burners in relation to wall colors and furnishings. The upper floor also provides space for storage rooms accessible by a rear staircase and freight elevator.

It is not likely that much of the furniture or the fittings of the old office will be useful in the new building, as some of these were put in when the building was erected and have been in use ever since.

The president of the company, Robert D. Weaver, will have his office in the new building, and there, also, will be a place for the meeting of the directors.

LONDON LANDMARK GOES, WATCHHOUSE DESTROYED

Building in Bishopsgate Dating Back to 1771 Gives Way to Improvement.

Special Correspondence of The Star.

LONDON, September 21, 1912.

One of the last of the old London watchhouses is going. It is a little yellow-faced building with two gables and is a tobacconist's shop next to St. Botolph's churchyard (the one with the fountain where the sparrows bathe) in Bishopsgate. Today the tobacconist was cheerfully selling cigarettes while the wreckers were busy over his head. They were just attacking the old lintel on which is carved the date of the building, 1771, and the name of the alderman who built it. Soon they will put up something in shiny brick or stucco, and the fragments of ancient Bishopsgate will be more forlorn than ever.

We still have a watchhouse left outside St. Sepulchre's in Giltspur street—a queer little lodge built on to the church wall and lived in by the sexton. This will still serve to remind us of the days before the first "peelers," when the policing of London was a haphazard and romantic business. Further down Bishopsgate from the watchhouse there is drastic restoration going on in the old little church of St. Ethelburga, known to every Londoner by the shops plastered on to its gothic portal-like swallows' nests. This is one of the churches that escaped the great fire and the genius of Wren. It will be all very smart and bright when they have done with it.

St. Vedast's, behind the old post office, one of the churches that Wren had a hand in, seems to be in some danger of demolition from the improvements contemplated in that quarter when the old post office has been cleared away and the new road is made to bring the traffic from St. Paul's bridge. It would not be a very great loss, although the gray geometrical spire has a homely and familiar look to city men, and one is used to glancing up at the puffy cherubs over the door. The interior is a melancholy example of ornamentation in the wrong place. The church has got four patron saints and a supply, liberal in proportion to its congregation, of eight church wardens.

Red Indians of Maine.

From the Argonaut.

A few tribes of American Indians are not dying out, though their numbers are small in comparison with their probable one-time strength. Two of these tribes live in Maine. In 1820, by the census, there were 370 Passamaquoddy Indians, and last year there were 446. In 1820 there were 390 Penobscots; now, more than ninety years later, there are 397. Both maintain their tribal conditions, and the Penobscots, at least, still dwell on the same village site that their forefathers occupied.

TRADITION IS DEMOLISHED

Character of Bricks Proves Wren Never Lived in House Being Razed.

Special Correspondence of The Star.

LONDON, September 21, 1912.

In Walworth road, that dun, slatternly yet characterful street in South London which runs from Elephant and Castle to Camberwell Green, workmen are busy demolishing three houses, one of which by a local tradition was occupied by Wren during the building of St. Paul's Cathedral.

The tradition was demolished some time ago by H. Syer Cuming, who pointed out that the house is built of statute bricks—that is to say, of bricks made according to the statute passed in the year 1777, half a century after Wren's death. The actual date of the house, however, is more probably about twenty years later. It is a tall, narrow building with a plaster frieze over its third-story windows, decorated by a molded crown and festoons. Farther along, however, in the same irregular row is a little house that might quite well be of Wren's time, with heavy wooden frames fitting closely into its flat window openings and its small bricks ("old London reds"), making a supporting arch over the windows.

Wren Lived in Bankside.

It is known that Wren lived in a house in Bankside on the river, where you can still get the best view of St. Paul's Cathedral, and a tablet on the building that occupies the site gives the fact of his residence. Several years ago there stood a handsome and curious house in Botolph lane, off Billingsgate, which was said to be the house where Wren lived when the monument was being built. It was pulled down, but careful-measured drawings and photographs were made of it. The only house still existing which may possibly have had Wren as a tenant is a fine brick mansion in Croydon. No trace remains of the Hampton court house in which he died, nor of the rooms where he lived and worked for so long in Old Scotland Yard, Whitehall.

SPECTERS IN HAMPTON COURT.

Corridors of Palace Held by Superstitious to Be Haunted.

Special Correspondence of The Star.

LONDON, September 21, 1912.

It is hoped that Gen. Sir George White's widow, Lady White, is not superstitious; otherwise she may be disturbed by the traditions of the Hampton court residence, which has been granted to her by the king. There are some fifty households living by his majesty's favor at Hampton court palace, the private compartments there being conferred on women only, widows and daughters of those who have served their country with distinction. Among these residents there is a lurking belief that the stairs and corridors of the residential quarters are haunted at night by the specters of historic personages.

One of the best authenticated stories relate to Henry the Eighth's wife, Katherine Howard. In the dead of night, it is said, one may still hear this poor queen rush along the "haunted corridor" as she rushed when the news of her sentence was brought. A watchman, indeed, recently declared that after hearing the rustle of a dress in the long gallery he saw a white transparent hand beckoning him from the doorway.

Uskub and Albanians.

From the London Chronicle.

Uskub, which has been entered by the turbulent Albanians, has always been debatable ground. Its very name is a modern version of Scopia, "lookout place," as in Byzantine times it was called because here a watch was kept for barbarian incursions from the west. Sir Charles Elliot, who visited it in the nineties, speaks of the mixture of Albanians, Bulgarians and Servians, with a sprinkling of Greeks. At that time the Bulgarian bishop at Uskub, encouraged by recent official concessions, was trying to open new schools and churches. But the Turks were not inclined to let the Bulgarians go too much ahead, and the vali gave the bishop a hint, "O Bulgarian," he said, "sit upon the eggs you have, and do not burst your belly by trying to lay more."

The Albanians are a mysterious people. What was their origin? "Perhaps," hazards Mr. W. A. Moore, "they were the Pelasgians who have puzzled Greek historians; and possibly they were the myrmidons whom Achilles brought to Troy. They have kept their blood and their own strange language, and the civilization of Europe has rolled on and left them in their mountains. Every man guards his own, and fears his neighbor unless he is a sure friend. There are no villages, only houses dotted at intervals high up round wide valleys. And every house is a fortress. The walls are of immense thickness, and the only openings are loopholes." The country abounds in blood feuds, and, according to Mr. Moore, "a stranger can only pass with the help of friends; but if he meet with the enemies of those friends their risk is his. That is the law of the mountains."